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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3125  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 8753  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1741  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3598  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1244  
INFO RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//  
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UNCLAS COLOMBO 000623

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STATE FOR SCA/INSB, DRL/NESCA AND PRM  
STATE ALSO PASS TO USAID  
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA  
AID/W FOR DCHA/FFP FOR JDWORKEN, JBORNS  
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA FOR ACONVERY, RTHAYER AND RKERR  
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA WBERGER  
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA MROGERS AND POL SBERRY  
USMISSION GENEVA FOR NKYLOH  
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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: "COMPETENT AUTHORITY" STILL IN CHARGE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Although the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) has indicated that responsibility for camp management in Manik Farms and in the transit sites in and around Vavuniya District was being transferred from Competent Authority (CA) Major General Chandrasiri to Vavuniya Government Authority (GA) Mrs. P. Charles, the CA is in fact still in control and is personally involved in the day to day management of Manik Farms. The CA holds a weekly interagency meeting to receive updates on the status of agencies' activities, as well as to give the CA a forum in which he can inform the agencies of decisions impacting on their operations. The CA announced that he had authorized the clearing of two addition zones (zones 7 and 8) as part of the overall plan to decongest Manik Farms. The CA also holds periodic "Zonal Meetings" that let him see first hand what is going on in the camps and provides agencies an opportunity to raise camp management issues. The CA approved the opening of additional stores in Manik Farms to bring in fish, meat, and a variety of other foods. He had previously approved bakeries, banks, and mobile food stores. The willingness of the GSL to allow businesses to operate in the camps could reflect a desire to bring some "normalcy" to Manik Farms. This could be the beginning of a process of transitioning the camps to more permanent "welfare" settlements. The CA stated that access is not a problem and that agencies working at Manik Farms should inform him of any access issues. The CA has reportedly stated that he plans to complete work on the camps in two months. End summary.

#### CAMP MANAGEMENT

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¶2. (SBU) As previously reported by USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), the GSL had indicated that responsibility for camp management in Manik Farms and in the transit sites in and around Vavuniya was being transferred from the CA to the Vavuniya GA. Although Sri Lankan military presence in the camps has been reduced significantly, the military is still present to a limited extent as part of ongoing security screening operations. In addition, military personnel can also be found in the camps clearing new sites and erecting tents. By and large, however, the military is now only located on the perimeter of Manik Farms controlling access into and out of the camps. Although the military might be

out of the camps, the CA is still in complete control and is, in fact, personally involved in the day to day management of Manik Farms.

13. (SBU) The USAID/OFDA regional advisor attended the last weekly CA interagency meeting that Major General Chandrasiri held with the heads of all U.N. agencies, government agencies (Health Department, Education Department, National Water Supply and Drainage Board, and the Rural Development Authority), as well as with representatives from all local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The purpose of this weekly coordination meeting is to update the CA on the status of agencies' activities in Manik Farms, as well as to give the CA a forum in which he can inform the various agencies of decisions that impact on their operations. During this meeting, for example, the CA informed the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that the Sri Lankan army had cleared 90 acres in Zone 5 and that six blocks were now ready. He instructed UNHCR and the other INGOs that they had five days to establish the necessary infrastructure - tents, latrines, water tanks, bathing/washing sites, communal kitchens, and public health centers - to support the new camp. The CA indicated that he was moving in 2,000 families (8,000 individuals) from Zone 2 to Zone 5 in five days and that the site should be ready by then. The CA said that he had carried out his job and now the agencies involved had to do theirs. The CA also announced for the first time that the Sri Lankan army had begun clearing a site for a sixth zone. He informed UNHCR and the GA that they had five days to survey the site and that they should plan on putting up tents in two to three weeks.

#### DECONGESTING CAMPS

14. (SBU) The CA also announced at this meeting that he had authorized the clearing of two additional zones (Zones 7 and 8) as part of the overall plan to decongest Manik Farms. This would increase Manik Farms from five to nine zones. The CA stated that an estimated 20,000 internally displaced person (IDP) families would be moved out of the existing zones and into the new zones to reduce overcrowding. The CA stated that his preference is one tent per family. Providing shelter for the 20,000 IDP families will require the construction of an equal number of shelters/tents. The CA directed UNHCR to provide them. The new zones will also require the same infrastructure, including water, latrines, medical support, learning centers, among others, as the other five zones which will likely stretch available resources. UNHCR has reported that the agency will need nearly 11,500 latrines to reduce the ration from 1:50 to 1:20 and 1,200 bathing spaces to meet needs. The CA also noted that an additional 20,000 100-liter garbage bins (55 gallon drums cut in half) are needed for the new camp sites.

#### CAMP STORES OPEN

15. (SBU) USAID/OFDA has previously reported that distribution of complementary food rations to IDPs, including canned fish, chick peas, tofu, curry, and chili powder would cease in approximately one month due to lack of continued donor funding. Funding was provided for the initial three-month emergency period. The GA has expressed concerns about the sudden cutoff of complementary food and has urged the U.N. Food Cluster to continue providing complementary food until the GSL could come up with a solution. The CA, however, has decided to open food stores within the camp site. The CA announced at the meeting that fish from Mannar District would be brought in the next day and that meat would also be made available. Even one of Sri Lanka's leading grocery chains, Keels, is prepared to begin operations in the sites. A Keels representative told the CA at the meeting that Keels was prepared to open up food stalls, operate mobile stores, and provide eight different ready-to-eat meals for sale to the IDPs. The CA requested the Keels representative to provide employees' names and their National ID card numbers and informed him that they could begin operations the following day. These businesses would join bakeries, banks (Ceylon Bank), and mobile food stores operated by the Multipurpose Cooperative Societies as commercial businesses approved to operate in the camps. It is difficult to say at this juncture how many IDPs have access to cash to buy goods, but NGOs report that many IDPs have relatives living abroad who can send remittances through the Bank of Ceylon. The bank also serves as a pawn broker giving loans in exchange for gold jewelry. INGOs also reported that many of the IDPs are on

pensions or are government workers that are receiving payments from the GSL. In addition, there are cash-for-work programs operating in the camps that are adding to the available cash. The CA also encourages cash-for-work activities. In addition, he instructed the Health Department to hire IDPs with prior experience in insecticide spraying and provide them with a salary.

#### TRANSITION TO SEMI-PERMANENT SHELTERS

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¶16. (SBU) The willingness on the part of the GSL to allow businesses to operate in the camp site before even basic emergency infrastructure is set up could reflect the GSL's desire to bring some "normalcy" to Manik Farms. This could be the beginning of a process of transitioning the camps from emergency camps to more permanent "welfare villages." The CA has stated in the past that he supports constructing semi-permanent shelter and mentioned in the CA interagency meeting that he would prefer that the 20,000 emergency shelter/tents he has asked for be semi-permanent structures. However, several shelter INGO's are concerned that the CA will insist that the 6,757 emergency shelters now in Zone 3, which are in need of maintenance and repair, should be upgraded to semi-permanent structures as part of the maintenance and repair process. This could be done by reinforcing the structures and by replacing the plastic sheeting and/or tarpaulins used on the side and roofs with a stronger, longer lasting material. UNHCR, the U.N. Shelter Cluster, and donors, however, have stated that they will not support such a move and that they will continue to only provide temporary emergency shelters to meet existing requirements. It remains to be seen whether the CA will ask UNHCR to upgrade the existing emergency shelters or whether the GSL will find other sources to provide the funding to do so. Even if UNHCR does complete the necessary repairs on the emergency shelters in Zone 3, they will only last another three months. Thus, the GSL decision to transition from emergency to semi-permanent shelters would just be postponed until September--the start of the northeast monsoon season.

¶17. (SBU) At a June 12 meeting with U.N. and local and international NGO representatives, Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services Rishad Bathiudeen asked that more permanent shelters be provided due to the upcoming rainy season. In addition, at a June 15 meeting with the Charge, Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa said that some people might put the wrong interpretation on the GSL desire to construct more permanent shelter for the IDPs. The GSL's intention is to provide in-camp vocational training to IDPs on shelter construction and allow IDPs take their upgraded shelter with them when they return to places of origin, he added. The June 16 edition of the Daily Mirror, however, had a front page graphic depicting the design of a "welfare village for IDPs" in Manik Farms that encompasses Zones 0-5.

#### ZONAL MEETINGS

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¶18. (SBU) Although the CA holds a weekly interagency meeting with the U.N., GA, and local and international NGOs to discuss camp management issues, he has also started holding meetings in each of the camp's four zones attended by the respective Zone Commander, U.N. agencies, local and international NGOs, and IDP representatives from each block. This is an on-the-ground, personal inspection by the CA of conditions in each of the zones. If the CA finds problems, he directs the appropriate agency to correct the deficiency. For example, last weekend he found latrines that were overflowing in one of the zones and instructed the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) to repair them. Less than one week after this inspection of the zones, the CA held a follow-up, day long meeting in Manik Farms that started at Zone 0 and ended at Zone 4. Every agency that works in Manik Farms was represented.

¶19. (SBU) These meetings not only allow the CA see first hand what is going on in the camps but also provide agencies an opportunity to raise camp management issues with him. Although the CA is a micro-manager with a "dictatorial" style, these meetings also provide give and take between the CA and the agencies. It appears from the outcome of these meetings that the CA is receptive to suggestions from agencies to change policies and/or to implement new ones that they recommend in order to improve humanitarian operations. For example, a week ago the CA announced that all water

bowzers had to be parked in the Manik Farms over night rather than in the respective agencies' parking area where they can be maintained. When the agencies pointed out to the CA that his policy hindered water distribution rather than improved it, the CA reversed the policy. When agencies asked the CA to set up diesel fueling points in the camps to avoid driving long distances to refuel water bowzers, the CA agreed and opened fuel points in the camps. When agencies complained about the lack of after-hours medical support in Manik Farms, the CA had two air conditioned vans brought to the camps so doctors had a place to stay at night. Also, in a discussion about allowing smoking in Manik Farms, the CA reported at the meeting that people were smuggling cigarettes into the camp and that it must stop. He stated, however, that IDPs had a right to smoke and announced with a bit of flair that he had called the "agent" in Vavuniya to bring a load of cigarettes to Manik Farms the next day. At the end of the meeting, however, a Health Department representative expressed his disagreement with the CA's decision to allow smoking in Manik Farms since IDPs were living in confined quarters and passive smoke was dangerous to children. The CA looked

at the audience and asked if anyone had a position on this. No one raised a hand. Then the CA announced that smoking was banned in Manik Farms.

#### ACCESS

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¶10. (SBU) The CA stated at the interagency meeting that access was not a problem and that any agency that encounters problems entering Manik Farms to carry out their work should inform him. Access to the CA, however, means merely transporting materials or relief supplies into the camp. It does not apply to agencies that want to drive into the camp with empty vehicles to monitor activities or supervise staff. INGOs that the USAID/OFDA regional advisor spoke with reported that they have found a way around this rule by loading their vehicles with relief supplies so it looks as if they are going to distribute relief commodities in Manik Farms. This tactic seems to be working and has enabled most agencies to gain access to the zones to monitor their projects. Several agencies, however, continue to report that they have to negotiate access every time they want to enter the camps, even if they are carrying relief supplies or other materials. The USAID/OFDA regional advisor reported that he was able to enter Zone 4 with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to visit IOM-supported public health centers without any delays at the gate. It seems that enforcement depends on who is manning the gate at the time.

#### CAMP COMPLETION

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¶11. (SBU) Several heads of agencies have informed the USAID/OFDA regional advisor that the CA has stated that he plans to complete work on the camps in two months. This is probably a realistic goal given the scope of the work already completed in Manik Farms. The CA, for his part, seems to be adept at incorporating U.N. agencies and international humanitarian actors and their resources into his plan for achieving this objective. If at the end of two months camp infrastructures are in place, the camps are decongested, stores are operating, and the transition from emergency camps to the semi-permanent "welfare villages" has begun, then the CA will have accomplished his mission.

¶12. (SBU) COMMENT: Completing the camps is one thing. Whether they will meet the UN's Sphere standards - or whether Sphere compliance is even an issue for the GSL - is another. Although improvements are being made on a weekly basis to infrastructure and services in the camps, there is a long way to go to bring them up to international humanitarian standards, leading to pessimism among INGOs working in Manik Farms that Sphere Standards will ever be met. For example, it is questionable whether the GSL can complete the water distribution network to each block in each zone or if the 11,000 plus latrines that need to be constructed will be built and old ones closed within the next two months. If the GSL declares that the humanitarian emergency is over when the camps are completed, then the international community may lose whatever leverage it now has to induce the GSL to bring the camps up to international standards.

